



The Crisis of Identity in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*: The Agonizing Awareness that Human-Worth Tangled to Fiscal Expediency

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Abstract— In this paper explores the complicated rapport-building perceptions among the concepts of psychological-alienation, conditional-love, and the sense of ancestral obligation as rendered in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Although the changing appearance of Gregor Samsa into a vermin can easily be connected with nervousness over identity-crisis or social-isolation, for this instance, this paper will dedicatedly endeavor to elucidate the underlying tragedy not related with the familial relationships and the sensitive matters as well as psychological dynamics they require. Gregor's transformation is predicated on an overemphasis on the sense of obligation he owes to his family as he continually relinquishes his own wishes in favor of guaranteeing fiscal expediency for his siblings. Then again, he is no longer capable of serving this economic tenacity to his family, as soon as the entire fondness presented to him becomes lucid as to its conditional position of bonding. This insight pursues to elucidate a helpless man Samsa by means of the transformation in *The Metamorphosis* a vermin merely aids to accentuate the long-existing sense of isolation in the protagonist as Kafka's own work epitomizes exactly how societies and familial structures can concentrate people invisible even when they are still human.



Keywords— Alienation, Fiscal Expediency, Identity-Crisis, Sense of Isolation, Vermin.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most distinguished works of the 20th century; Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) is usually considered a deep exploration of alienation, mental agony, and the dehumanizing effects of modern society. Whereas it is often understood within the existential and absurdist traditions, the character of Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into a vermin, a creature is less recognizable as a moment of surrealistic fantasy than as the symbolic realization of the already broken self. In *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka describes a world where human

dignity is reduced, as it were, to the measurement of one's economic and social production, in that way labeling people as objects, rather than as emotional creatures (Kafka 89). *The metamorphosis* of Gregor Samsa ribbons away the fragile supporting to familial and social belonging. Physically, Gregor is imprisoned before and after the transformation. This is just because before the transformation, Gregor lives in a state of psychological imprisonment. This is because he is the only breadwinner for the Samsa family. Because of the overwhelming feeling of responsibility, he is unable to realize his own

desires. Corngold pointed out that Gregor Samsa is defined by his work and that he therefore “remains a function, not a person” in both his own family and in society (Corngold 45). Consequently, Gregor’s condition, in terms of feeling alienated, is the external manifestation of a preceding feeling of self-denial and invisibility.

The reaction of the family to Gregor’s metamorphosis further accents the conditional character of their love. Although at first there is shock and discomfort, soon their empathy evaporates when Gregor loses the ability to provide parsimoniously. As Grete and the parents undertake these newly assigned roles, Gregor comes to be viewed more as an impediment than as a relative, and this demonstrates just how love in the family exists as a condition for use and for economic contributions (Sokel 512). This also symbolically reflects Kafka’s critique on family obligations that lack love and become merely transactional in nature. This paper undertakes to interpret *The Metamorphosis* psychologically to understand the impact of conditional love, family ties, and social alienation on the tragic downfall of Gregor Samsa. Based on various critical perspectives on alienation and dehumanization, the paper contends that the final tragedy in *The Metamorphosis* is not in its physical metamorphosis but in the systematic lack of emotional acknowledgement on the part of both the family and the larger social environment, offered in the narrative by Franz Kafka.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The perilous conventional surrounding of Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* has long recognized its concern with themes of alienation, dehumanization, and the psychological aftereffects of modern societal organization. The early Kafka scholarship places this work within an existential tradition of anxiety and absurdity and sees Gregor Samsa’s transformation as an analogue of man’s alienation from himself and society. Max Brod, a close associate of Kafka’s, sees Gregor Samsa’s transformation as an expression of spiritual alienation and existential guilt and recognizes in Kafka’s plots men imprisoned within unreadable systems and barred from genuine human relationships (Brod 112). More recent interpretations of the work further develop the existential and identity crisis, nowadays pinpointing the socio-economic aspects of Gregor’s alienation. Indeed, the impact of capitalism on Gregor, turning him into a mere utility, has been widely explored from both the Marxist and sociological perspectives. Walter H. Sokel, to cite one of these interpretations, has claimed that Gregor’s existence is completely defined by his role as a working man, and that his cessation of economic functionality is

the direct cause of his alienation from the familial structure (Sokel 510). Even more insight can be gained from psychological perspectives that view the plight of Gregor in terms of internalized guilt, repression, and self-denial. Stanley Corngold sees the metamorphosis of Gregor as a manifestation of psychological self-denial through external projection as he believes that in reality, Gregor feels like a bug himself as a result of his many years of denial and self-exclusion (Corngold 48).

This indicates that the vermin skin is a reality of his self-acceptance of dehumanization rather than a mere punishment. There has been interest, albeit limited, in family dynamics and the idea of conditional love. The Samsa family’s love has been cited as depending on Gregor’s financial success. In the novel, according to Straus, there is a lack of empathy among family members. This shows the very fragile state of love when it comes under economic duress (Straus 662). This can clearly be seen through the transformation of Grete, the character turning from Gregor’s caregiver to his worst critic. Contemporary scholars incorporate both psychological and sociological approaches to studies on how family obligation is made to be one of the vehicles of emotional violence. Some scholars, like Ritchie Robertson, observe that Kafka portrays the family in his stories in such a manner that it is not a haven but an image of oppressive social institutions, reflecting their structures in order to instill conformity and suppress any kind of vulnerability (Robertson 94). Based on this, Gregor’s family is made to be one that is psychological trauma! By to its members, and they are thus made to feel very isolated. Despite the existence of much work, there remain relatively few studies that synthesize conditional love, alienation, and dehumanization in society within the context of Kafka’s work. In working towards improving past concepts of existential, psychological, and socio-economic interpretations, this article contends that Gregor Samsa’s tragic story is founded in the nexus of family obligation and abandonment. In consolidating its observations within the psychology of love, this report proposes an original work within Kafka studies in its documentation of how love relationships engender the debasing impulse of society, resulting in the destruction of Gregor.

III. METHODOLOGY

The imminent research problem, the present study assumes a qualitative and interpretive research paradigm, wherein the primary sources means of data collection actively involves the close reading of a text namely, Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. In extending the above, the current research study which takes the form of a literary

analysis or critical interpretation does not purport to involve the use of empirical information, instead seeking to interpret the narrative, characters, symbolism, and themes inherent in the novel in order to shed light on the psychological and societal implications of Gregor Samsa's tragic fate. In this way, the method of the current research pursues to interpret the salient points in the novel in which the themes of family obligation, emotional alienation, and social isolation intersect, particularly in regard to Gregor's relationship with family members and, in turn, his perceptions regarding the nature of himself (Kafka 21–56).

This up-to-date research as a result assumes an intrinsically interdisciplinary method, conjoining psychological, as well as more generally societal, forms of literary criticism in interpreting the nature of Gregor's transformation in terms going beyond the literal or more fantastic implications thereof. Following two branched stratagem confirms that a well-versed position in terms of the back-and-forth between individual misery and the interchange also exterior aspects of distressful event is attained (Corngold 47; Sokel 509). Primary sources as original text of *The Metamorphosis* along with secondary sources contain published journal articles, English departmental assignment work or critical analyses on the text. It ought to be prominent they will not be observing ancient or factual aspects but will be based on thematic worries for theoretical steadiness between the attitude of conditional-love and alienation as operationally engaged within renovated ancestral connections (Robertson 91).

Discussion on Mental and Societal Perspectives:

The mental state will desire at the perceptions of despotism, guiltiness, and the crisis of identity destruction related additional psychoanalytic reproach. Gregor's prodigious sense of responsibility and self-sacrifice reveals that Freud categorizes as affected individual defeats personal-desires in respect to external prospects. As a result, Gregor's transmutation can be read as a bodily expression of psychosomatic downfall, representing the destruction of selfhood under long emotive suppression. Criticizer for example Stanley Corngold proceeds further footsteps, emotionally, and recommend that Gregor's vermin form conveys an inside self-conception of trans-formal shape over years as well as sensitive negligence and self-denial. This is an apparent impact factor that Samsa has emanated to consent his dilapidation rather than deed in conflict to how far he has adopted the familial unity in accordance with utilitarian outlook. His steady removal from anthropological yearnings and message replicates crisis of identity that heralds his carnal demise.

The story also deals with concepts on isolation and dehumanization enthused by Marxist philosophy. Karl

Marx's idea of isolated-labor is cooperative in considerate Samsa's situation within workstation and domestic matters there he would be valued only for his fiscal expediency. On every occasion Gregor suits incapable to continue effort, frightened socially and ardently, that means that commercial point has infused into bosom affairs. As stated by Sokel, Samsa's kinfolk's reappearance the unequal types of the up-to-date fiscal coordination, constructing a house a place of conditional-love and hospitality. The family at this point obliges as a diminutive form of culture. In accordance with view of Robertson, he stated Kafka boons familial power as part of influential supremacy that controls agreement and rebukes dependency or economic vulnerability (Robertson 93). Grete's alteration from a professional career into the initiator of segregation expressions focuses societal purposes darkens sensitive influences once fiscal expediency fall-down. This means Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* demonstrates how post-modern guys is emotionally engineered to think dehumanization is approximately that is conventional social systems rationalize demonstrative rejection for the sake of responsibility and work.

Gregor Samsa's Crisis of Identity as a Vermin Appearance:

Gregor Samsa's transformation also provides a visible, physical embodiment of a self which is already split in his mind. From the beginning of the novella, Gregor's chief worry is not his transformation but his failure to get to his office, indicating the extent to which the self is linked to employment obligations (Kafka 4). His worry about the availability of the train is a clear indication that his humanity is subordinated to his job. On the word of Corngold, his transformation provides a physical embodiment of his self, which is "already perceived as lessened and expendable" (Corngold 46). Nevertheless, in spite of his monstrous nature, Gregor maintains his humanity in terms of emotions, empathy, and responsibilities, especially towards his family at the end of the story when his uncommunicative nature triggers his speedy Breakdown (catastrophe). Misplacing the ability to speak becomes a metaphor for being ignored by the world, as his thoughts and feelings have terminated to be counted (Kafka 18). With his losing his sense of being a socially recognized being, his humanity itself becomes null and void (social construct implied in Kafka's narrative).

Familial Responsibility and the Aspects of Conditional-Love:

The fact is that the Samsa family relate to Gregor on the basis of financial dependence rather than emotional reciprocity. Before his transformation, Gregor happily

gave up personal freedom in order to repay his father's debts and keep a household, feeling this sacrifice to be a display of familial love (Kafka 27). But this is proven to be fundamentally conditional. The moment Gregor becomes unfit to work; his position in the family radically changes from breadwinner to liability. According to Walter H. Sokel, Gregor's decline provides evidence that the family has internalized their capitalist values of belonging based on usefulness (Sokel 510). The influence of this metamorphosis could be appreciated in the developing acrimony between Samsa's kinfolk-lineage, mainly his daddy's viciousness, represented over and over with events such as apple-throwing, instigating bodily injury to Gregor that incorporate ample refusal by his familial persons (Kafka 63). The apple in Gregor's back gratifies as a long lasting example of apple of discord in his family, which characterizes psychosomatic trauma triggered by Samsa's conditional-love. Grete's alteration in vermin the story functions here as a vital point. Grete initiates with an empathetic attitude but goes through a matter-of-fact or utility-based metamorphosis, lastly proposing that Gregor must be detached. Grete's expression, "we must get rid of it," signifies complete effacement of Gregor's crisis of identity as a brother and human creature (Kafka 75). Straus explains this transformation in Grete's character: "A breakdown in economic structures leads to a destruction of emotional ties, revealing that love is based on conditions rather than being unconditional," as obvious in Gregor's story through Grete's transformation (Straus 664).

Social-Alienation and the Appearance Downfall:

Gregor's isolation is not only originated with his family but it is connected with the fragile fabric social instruments of segregation too. His job as a wandering salesman is a pure example of Marx's insightful model on estranged labor, "in which the activity of doing the job is experienced not as fulfilling but as forced" (Marx 72). Gregor's weariness, less autonomy of decision, letdown to face definite less mental support, all proposes that his life expectancy already want for meaning of nothingness. The transformation only overstates this sensation by interpreting him irresponsible as well as unfit for any profession. The kinfolk's optimal desire to turn their flat into a lodging family for outsiders; additionally it illustrates Gregor's social deportation. The appreciation and accommodation come up with the money for outsiders in the flat that contrast with Gregor's segregation, wallowing, and muzzling (Kafka 68). This converse outcome exemplifies Kafka's interpretation on societal ethics, in which fiscal transaction revenues get superiority over human communication (Kafka 68). Gregory Robertson observes: "Kafka's strategy is, however, to

render Gregor invisible within society, because modern society tends to marginalize all those who refuse to function within productive life" (Robertson 95). Gregor's increasingly strong identification with his vermin metamorphosis, the withdrawal into darkness, lack of appetite, and indifference to neglect that indicates the beginning of the internalization of rejection by society. This eventual death is received with feelings, not of sorrow, but of relief to affirm Gregor's worthlessness and usability only for a specific role in life (Kafka 82). The beginning of freedom experienced by Gregor's family illustrates how Gregor had been dehumanized.

Existential Crisis and the Tragedy of Acceptance:

Whatever purifies Gregor's tragic experience even more tragic is the fact that his resignation is also rooted in psychology. Gregor neither resists nor rebels against being excluded but chooses to submit to his situation and even considers his disappearance an advantage to his family. This attitude, according to Freud, symbolizes the triumph of internalized authority over the individual's desire when the feeling of guilt takes control over self-preservation (Freud 35). Gregor's act of self-annihilation, in this case, cannot be considered a rebellious act but rather an act that erases the self. It can be observed that in Kafka's work, modern man learns to associate his dignity and worth as a self with self-sacrifice as well as self-annihilation in this case to the point that a Gregor Samsa in the story learns to consider sacrificing himself as an advantage to his sister and parents. Gregor's last thoughts in the story reflect more on the welfare of his sister and parents rather than any concern or bitterness, which symbolizes the conditioning that results from the ideals and principles surrounding the psychology and effects of conditional love in Gregor's case (Kafka 81).

IV. CONCLUSION

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka is a haunting presentation of human suffering that goes way beyond the grotesque spectacle of physical transformation. This essay has presented the idea that Gregor Samsa's tragedy was not rooted in his vermin body but in the psychological and social terms that shaped his existence: namely, conditional love within the family, oppressive duty, and pervasive alienation. It has shown through a close reading of Gregor's identity, his family relationships, and their social setting, that Kafka unmasks the tragic ends humanity might impose when it bases human worth on usefulness rather than compassion. Gregor's refusal to waver in his sense of family obligation shows how well he has absorbed the expectations both of family and of society at large. His sacrifice for others, presented at first as love,

increasingly serves him as a means of psychological annihilation, rendering him susceptible to abandonment once he ceases to be productive for them. The fact that the family changes from dependency to rejection shows how their love in turn depends for its continuance on Gregor's productivity, thus affirming Kafka's criticism of love transformed into a trade (Kafka 75). The failure to mourn Gregor's death shows how completely he has been denied recognition as a human being.

Through the integration of the psychological and the sociological approaches, the paper has been able to demonstrate how Gregor's acceptance of his degradation depends on internalized feelings of guilt as well as social conditioning. Kafka's statement about the nature of the modern person's responsibility indicates how the modern person, instead of being the simple victim of external forces, is psychologically conditioned to conform to dehumanizing societal structures even in the face of their own destruction (Freud 35; Sokel 512). Gregor's acceptance, therefore, represents the ultimate in alienation. Finally, *The Metamorphosis* urges readers to rethink their concepts of love in family relationships, membership in society, and humanity. The story of transformation by Kafka shows how "the most fundamental kind of metamorphosis takes place in relations, where love is made conditional, duty is destructive, and man loses himself in the machinery of modern civilization." Gregor Samsa's experience is a condemnation of a system of society that allows no compassion and is always a reminder of the psychological pain that comes with conditional humanity.

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